

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 126024
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O R 180035Z MAY 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY VALLETTA IMMEDIATE
INFO ALL NATO CAPITALS
USCINCEUR
USDEL MC BRUSSELS
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES
USLOSACLANT NORFOLK
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM

S E C R E T STATE 126024

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS:MPOL, NATO, MT

SUBJECT: MALTESE NEUTRALITY GUARANTEE -- ACCESS TO
NAVAL FACILITIES

REF: VALLETTA 1268, DTG 121149Z MAY 78

1. IN RESPONSE TO INQUIRY FROM ITALIANS, AMBASSADOR
MAY INFORM THEM THAT US VIEW IS THAT EXCLUSION OF WARSAW
PACT (ESPECIALLY SOVIET) FORCES FROM MALTESE FACILITIES
IS OF PRIMARY IMPORTANCE AND THAT SAFEGUARDING US ACCESS

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PAGE 02 STATE 126024

IS OF SECONDARY IMPORTANCE AND NOT WORTH THE CANDLE IF IT
CAN BE OBTAINED ONLY BY LEAVING THE DOOR OPEN TO SOVIET
ACCESS. LANGUAGE WHICH LEAVES ACCESS BY MILITARY SHIPS
TO GOM'S DISCRETION WOULD ALLOW LATER MODIFICATION OF
MINTOFF POLICY WHICH EVENTUALLY COULD LEAVE US WITH
WORST OF BOTH WORLDS: SOVIET ACCESS AND NO US ACCESS.

2. EMBASSY SHOULD POINT OUT, IN ADDITION, THAT NEW LANGUAGE PROPOSED BY DA-RIN ALSO LEAVES CERTAIN QUESTIONS:

A. US, OF COURSE, CANNOT SPEAK FOR OTHER INTERESTED WEST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES. HOWEVER, BY SPEAKING ONLY IN TERMS OF "MAJOR" MILITARY ALLIANCES OR "BLOCS," IT APPEARS TO EXCLUDE SHIPS OF OTHER NATO ALLIES INCLUDING MEDITERRANEAN STATES WHICH ARE NOT NOW DENIED ACCESS.

B. IT WOULD STILL PERMIT DISCRIMINATION IN TREATMENT OF SUPPORT AND QUASI-MILITARY VESSELS. THE GREAT MAJORITY OF SUCH SOVIET VESSELS SAIL UNDER COMMERCIAL COVER, BUT OURS DO NOT.

3. IN LIGHT OF THE ABOVE CONSIDERATIONS, AND RECOGNIZING THAT US ACCESS IS NOT REALISTICALLY POSSIBLE, WE PREFER THE ORIGINAL EXPLICIT SUPERPOWER EXCLUSION RATHER THAN MORE GENERAL FORMULATIONS.

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